

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1496
INFO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

UNCLAS HERMOSILLO 101

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SENV, MX
SUBJECT: POLLUTION OF SAN PEDRO RIVER

REF: HERMOSILLO 099

1. SATURDAYS, APRIL 1, 1978, EDITION OF ARIZONA DAILY STAR,
TUCSON, ARIZONA, CARRIES ARTICLE HEADLINED "POLLUTION OF
SAN PEDRO ENDED BY MEXICAN MINE".
FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF THE ARTICLE.

2. QUOTE.

"COPPER MINE WASTES CARRIED ACROSS THE BORDER FROM MEXICO BY
THE SAN PEDRO RIVER HAVE BEEN STOPPED AT THEIR SOURCE,
ACCORDING TO THE U.S. COMMISSIONER ON THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN
BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION.

THE REPORT THAT THE MINING DISCHARGES HAD STOPPED WAS
RECEIVED BY U.S. REP. MORRIS K. UDALL, D-ARIZONA.

U.S. COMMISSIONER JOSEPH FRIEDKIN TOLD UDALL THAT THE WASTES CAME
FROM A RESERVOIR THAT HELD LEACHING WATER FOR A COPPER MINING
OPERATION IN CANANEA, SONORA.

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RUNOFF FROM RECENT HEAVY RAINS HAD CAUSED THE RESORVOIR TO
FLOW OVER ITS RETAINNING DAM AND SEND THE LEACHING WATER INTO A
POND BELOW. THE POND, IN TURN, HAD DISCHARGED THE WASTES
INTO THE SAN PEDRO.

FRIEDKIN SAID THE OVERFLOWS HAD STOPPED AND THAT A DAM AND

PIPELINE SYSTEM WAS BEING BUILT TO DIVERT RUNOFF WATER AROUND THE RESERVOIR.

RON MILLER, DIRECTOR OF THE STATE WATER CONTROL BUREAU, SAID THE RIVER'S REDDISH COLOR APPEARED TO BE CHANGING ON THIS SIDE OF THE BORDER AND THAT PH LEVELS WERE BACK TO NORMAL.

MILLER REPORTED LAST WEEK THAT HEAVY METAL LEVELS IN THE RIVER WERE ABOVE SAFE DRINKING LIMITS AND THREATENED CATTLE AND WILDLIFE.

CATTLE OWNERS IN THE AREA SHOULD STILL BE CAUTIOUS ABOUT GIVING SAN PEDRO WATER TO THEIR HERDS, ACCORDING TO MEAD STIRLAND OF THE BUREAU OF WATER QUALITY CONTROL. FROM THE BORDER TO PALOMINAS, HE SAID, THE SAN PEDRO IS A "DEAD RIVER"
IN TERMS OF AQUATIC WILDLIFE.

AFTER MEXICO FAILED TO CONTAIN THE MINE'S DISCHARGES AS PROMISED BEFORE MARCH 19, FRIEDKIN FILED A PROTEST WITH HIS MEXICAN COUNTERPART ON THE JOINT COMMISSION AND UDALL REQUESTED STATE DEPARTMENT ACTION".

END QUOTE.
SACKSTEDER

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NNN

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